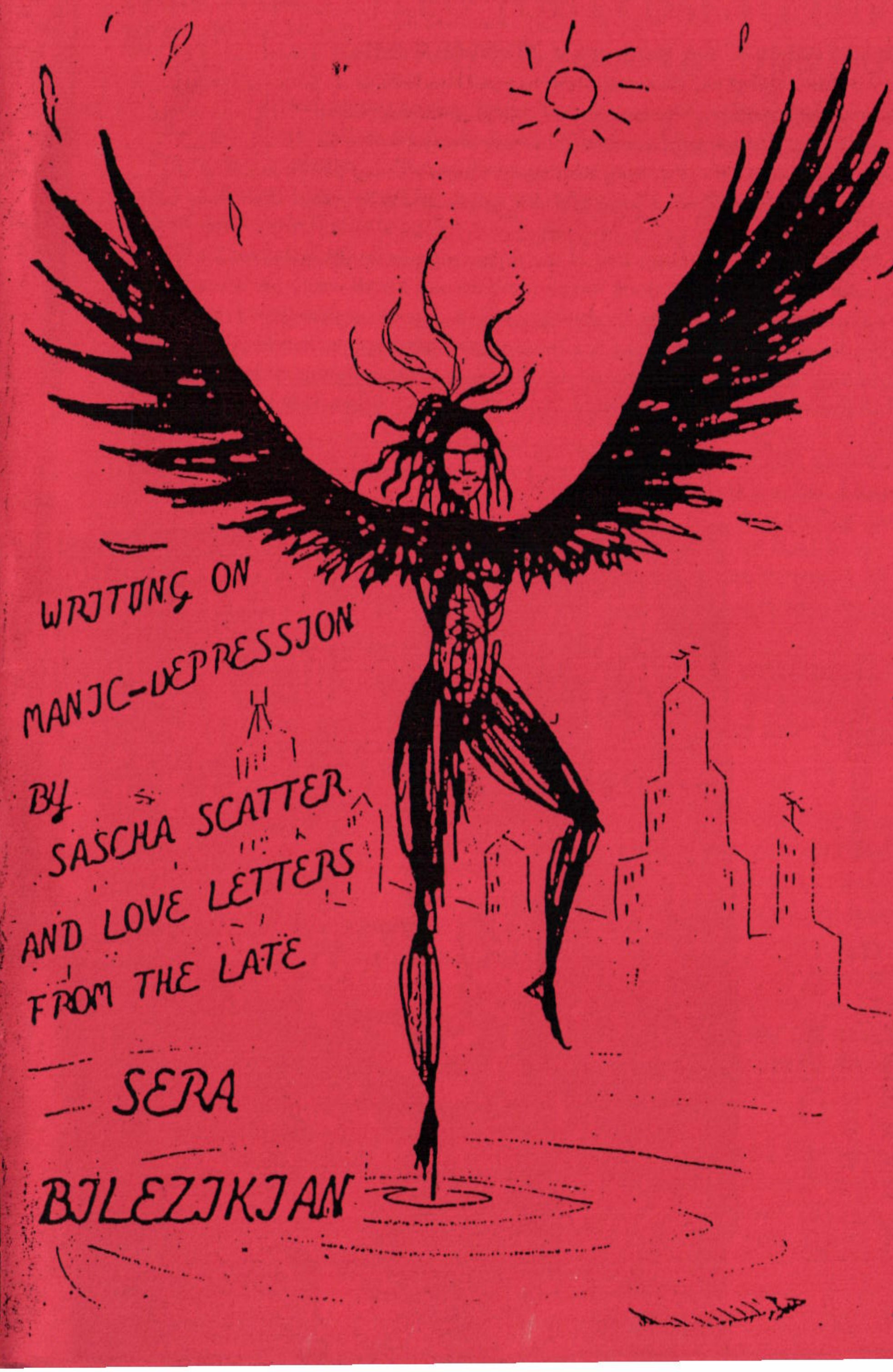
LIVE FAST
LOVE HARD

TOO CLOSE TO THE SUN



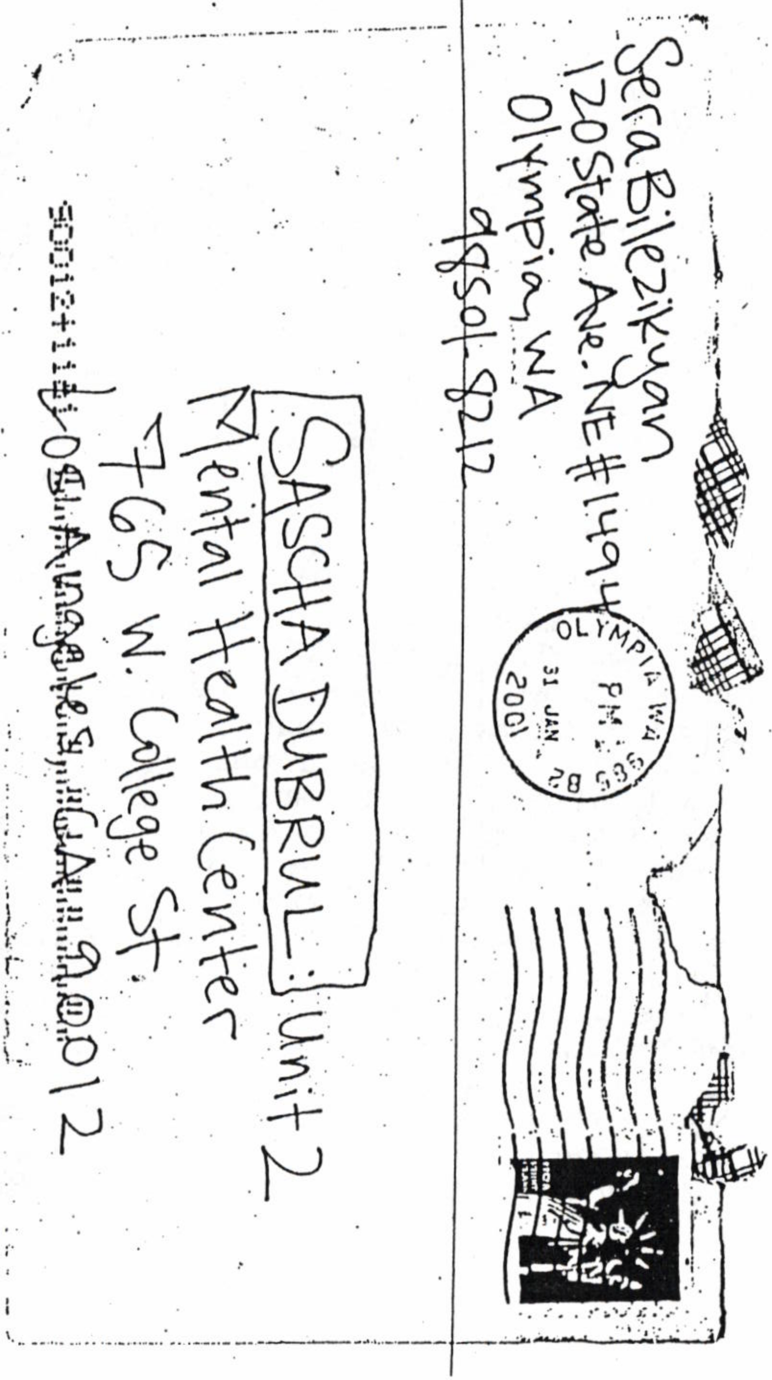
WRITING ON
MANIC-DEPRESSION
BY
SASCHA SCATTER
AND LOVE LETTERS
FROM THE LATE

SERA
BILEZIKJIAN

For Sera [illegible] [illegible] . by Eric Drooker 2/15/02 eautiful, man. That's the crazy part. You could almost see the ocean rom the bridge. It was so peaceful." He was crying just a little and I ould picture the expression on his somber face as we talked and onded in the intense way that mutual friends do when their nnecting link is suddenly gone. When we hung up I found the bridge n the road atlas. North of Baltimore on the I-95. The Susquehanna iver feeding into the Chesapeake Bay feeding into the Atlantic cean. Death by water. Painful. All that time in the air to think about hat you've just done. The finality. *"And I am not scared looking at yself, if anything, I'll recognize the real truth of who I am."* Sera's yptic words in her last piece for Slug and Lettuce, the magazine we oth had had a column in. How long had she been planning it? How ng did she torture herself with the thought before she finally got the erve to do it? I shuddered, and took a deep breath.

When the depression comes it's like having lead weighs on all our limbs and thoughts and feelings and emotions. It's not just being ally sad. There's a big difference. I'm really sad right now because ra's dead, but I'm definitely not depressed. Just imagine for a cond that all of your deepest and worst insecurities have risen to e surface and are present with you wherever you go: every nversation you have has a second dialog going on internally telling u that everything coming out of your mouth is full of shit and that u're a liar and a hypocrite and a coward and you better kill urself as soon as you can before everyone finds out how fucked up u really are. And then imagine that the pain and shame of hating urself is so great that the thoughts of ending your life are constant, e a broken record: throwing yourself in front of moving cars, nping out of windows, gun in the back of the head, carbon noxide in the garage, a handful of pills...it's both exhausting and rrible. And it feels like it's never going to end.

The couple times it's happened to me I've stopped being able take care of myself. I get cuts on my hands and don't tend to them en after they get infected and nasty. I get really confused and ttered -- lose all sense of direction and get lost in neighborhoods I rmally know like the back of my hand. I'm shut down. I stop being e to perform basic tasks like going to work and buying groceries. I p being able to communicate with anyone because I can't even get the energy to formulate sentences between the black noise and ken records skipping in my brain. Everything seems pointless and levant because I know I'm going to be dead soon. The only thing I m to remember how to do is to eat, and that's what I do: eat until sick because I'm craving something that I'm not getting. And then I l like shit because I'm not even paying attention to what my body



Sera Bilezikyan
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OLYMPIA WA 985
PM
31 JAN
2001

SASCHA DUBRUL : Unit 2
Mental Health Center
765 W. College St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

crazy adventures and some tranquility
too,
is me,
and am i anything more than a dull
romantic from New York
a traveller, a writer, a dreamer,
who feels too much and thinks too little
wants way too much
yes, i am so much more
i can't even see out from behind myself
and i just don't know where I'm
going...
i don't know if i ever told you this,
but one of the pieces for your new
zine, (the trick) made me cry like a
madwoman with all the freedom in the
world,
wondering if i'd ever understand myself
as well
as you somehow did without knowing
me at all...

I DONT KNOW IF I AM WORRYING OR NOT I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN OR
NOT I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE CRIED OR NOT I DON'T KNOW
IF I'VE TRIED TO OR NOT
I FEEL LIKE A WET SEED WILD IN THE ~~HOT~~ BLIND EARTH
somehow though I am still cold.

Just know I'm there for you, wherever I am,
whatever you need,
scotch tape or a travel partner.
I don't know what love is but i'll
write it here, I'll miss you.
Y cada vez que estoy a tu lado, pensaré de las historias
que hemos escrito juntos...
goodbye, for now,
love, Sera xoxoxo

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wants or needs. I stop being able to get out of bed. I curl up in a ball and just wish that someone would come and put me out of my misery. My whole life is one big mistake. And no matter how many times I've come out of it, each new time it never feels like it's ever going to end, it feels like I'm going to be in mental agony forever.

I can't really get mad at her. Sera wasn't in control of herself when she jumped off that bridge. She just wanted the pain to end. She just felt so uncomfortable in her own skin that she couldn't take it anymore. Suicide is not malicious act. I spent four months of last year totally suicidal and psychotic, stuck in a miserable halfway house for people with severe psychiatric disabilities, far away from all my friends, my head eating itself alive with self-hatred and despair. Manic-depression is a sickness, a disease. But it's more complicated because it always seems like it's the most brilliant and talented people like Sera who are cursed with it. It's a blessing and a curse -- an imbalance of chemicals in their brains that torments them but lets them see and feel things other people can't; allows them to create art and music and words that grab people by the heart and soul -- allows them to kiss the sky and come back down to tell the tale.

What I've begun to discover in attempting to write about this mess is that there just aren't good words in our vocabularies to talk about it. What is a word for something that's a blessing as well a disease? And I don't really like that word disease at all. It doesn't really capture what's going on because it's so two-sided: on the flipside of all that horror lies so much beauty. But the fact is that although there's so much we still don't know about manic-depression, we do know it's genetic -- passed down through family, through generation, through blood. It's brought out by environmental factors like a fucked up childhood, but only for those who are genetically predisposed to it. You can't get it by watching too much television and eating too many poptarts as a youth (which used to be my original hypothesis as to why I was such a headcase.)

So for lack of better words: what Sera had was a disease. But it was also very much a gift. She was sensitive to the pain of others because she truly knew what pain felt like. She had an incredible mind which raced with a fury and drew connections in seconds -- the structure of her written sentences reflect a mind that could juggle multiple subjects with ease. She was a brilliant thinker and had a haunting way with words -- she knew how to paint a picture in text and it to you like a priceless gift. She had an extraordinary memory, she talked about going to law school for environmental law and we all knew she could do it. But man, she was so tormented by the demons inside her. She struggled for justice and peace wherever she went, but

he old folks who lived in my neighborhood. I was going to raise a ton
 ıf money and get jobs for all my friends and all the kids in my hood
 ıanging out on the street and smoking weed all day.

We were going to have a little revolution on our block. I was ıaving these amazing conversations with my neighbors who emembered when the Black Panthers, who had formed as an rganization not but a couple blocks from our house back in the late 50's, had their free breakfast program and community patrols going. was talking on the radio and giving speeches in front of local ommunity groups and making appearances on the local public access V station -- articulating a vision of taking power out of the hands of etro-chemical corporations and putting it back in the hands of the eople through localized community controlled agriculture. I was uper charming and eloquent and articulate and full of passion. And I eemed to inspire people wherever I went. I felt like I was on fire and felt historic and I was loving it.

Then at some point things began to get a little out of control. I topped sleeping well at night because my head was constantly ursting with amazing ideas. I would draw out these complex iagrams in my journal fleshing out the importance of edge space etween wild and cultivated systems and how one was dependent on ıe other. I'd take detailed notes on a curriculum I wanted to teach to igh school students about the relationships between cultural and iological diversity. I was reading twenty books at the same time and riting twenty-five essays. My mind would race, moving micro and ıen scaling out to macro and then right back to micro within a matter f seconds. I could feel the presence of old friends with me as things ıey had said to me in the past would surface in my mind. I would ave conversations with them and write them down. I felt like I was ıanneling spirits or something.

Then my thoughts started to get more desperate. Everything arted to seem very relevant. I mean *everything*. My mind suddenly ıd the power to take any two things and draw connections between em. The projects I was working on suddenly seemed very very ıportant, event urgent. I felt like I had discovered THE secret that as going to bring everyone together -- unite everyone in the world ;ainst the global power structure. I was reading a book called *volutionary Suicide* by Huey P. Newton and books about DINTELPRO, the program the FBI used to destablize activist groups the '70's. I started getting paranoid. I started to have the very sconcerting feeling that I was about to die, that there were ıportant people that wanted me dead.

I started getting really short with my friends, cutting them off mid-sentence because I knew how important it was that I get my

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DEAR SASCHA,
The Last time i wrote a letter like this i was in the same
desperate, physical position: a few pages in my journal
left and not much money in my wallet, a long
journey ahead, somewhere, wondering how worth it
any of it is, the paper, the person, sitting outside
my friend's house in Baltimore waiting, for something
to end, at the same time always, begging to
be remembered.

But from today on, the days are only getting
longer, more daylight to see or hitchike by,
and I feel this will make me stronger.
and my mind is jumping in the same way like
when i'm scared of what i'm trying to say
so i say words that barely belong to eachother,
just to keep breathing fast or keep out
silence, you see, I'm just so scared of not
feeling, fuck if we could only make
jealousy into awe once again, you say you're
jealous of me because I can cry,
I'm jealous of you for so many reasons,
but like someone I once tried too hard
to love or maybe ~~to~~ hard [redacted] to make
him fall in love with me had etched onto
his leg, like you've screened yourself, the
upsidedown martini glass talking, the
party's over, something so downright and
complete New York about the raw coldness
of all these pictures in my head,
my toes are fucked up, your mouth is
fucked up. a million excuses to evade
beauty, forget what our hearts are even
for...

The sentences which run away from themselves
when words have no spelling, letters no
shape, your hands only have speed
and stealth, i know you understand
this the way [illegible]

MEMORY believes before knowing remembers, Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders, knows remembers believes, in and out of remembering but in knowing constant as the bleak walls, the bleak windows where in rain soot from the yearly adjacenting chimneys streaked like black tears... (Faulkner 'Light in August') But I have seen the city do an unbelievable sky, go on about country skies seen from trains, it can empty itself of surface, and more like the ocean than the ocean itself go deep, starless. The right tune whistled in a doorway or lifting up from the circles and grooves of a record can change the weather. From freezing to hot to cool. (Toni Morrison, 'JAZZ') If we can liken life, for a moment, to a furnace, then freedom is the fire which burns away illusion... Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word 'love' here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace- not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth' (James Baldwin)

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thoughts out before it was too late. I knew that I wouldn't live to
the day, but I wanted to make sure I did as much as I could befo
THEY got me. I needed to leave behind instructions for everyone
they'd know what to do without me around. I'd wake up in the
morning from a couple hours of restless sleep and pour out page
pages of ideas for what life should look like after the revolution.
housemates, my girlfriend, and everyone else around in the comn
was getting really sick of me and telling me to chill the fuck out.
great I ideas, they said, but no one was going to listen if I was tal
so fast.

I knew they'd understand later. I stopped hanging out wi
anyone who knew me well and I started hanging out with peopl
had just met me and didn't find it so disturbing that I had slipp
totally off my rocker. I started walking up to total strangers on t
street and talking to them and have amazing conversations. I'd
to the community garden down the street and just hang with the
plants. I was so in tune with the universe that I could feel every
blade of grass as if they were breathing with me. Each plant had
incredibly different personality and I would spend hours just list
to them talk to me. It was so incredible. Meanwhile, I began to ge
more and more estranged from my community. My housemates w
scared of me. Everyone was talking about me behind my back, bu
one had the courage to actually confront me.

At some point my mom came out to visit from New York
in her typical fashion, proceeded to organize a bunch of my frien
together to take some direct action. One night they sat me down
pleaded with me to start taking my drugs again. I was furious.

Were they fucking blind? Hadn't they been reading the n
Didn't they realize that the pharmaceutical companies and the a
chemical companies had merged into the LIFE SCIENCE INDUS
and these people wanted nothing less than enslavement of the h
race and control of the entire planet. These were the same peopl
were trying to genetically engineer the world's crops to be depen
on their herbicides, the same one's who created the technology t
can make seed crops reproduce sterile. It's so fucking American
think that you can fix everything with a pill or feed people with
chemicals. Hadn't they read Huxley's Brave New World? How c
they not see what was going on when it was so obviously right in
of their eyes? You want me to trust these people's medicine? You
gotta be kidding me. These people peddle pesticides to farmers i
developing world and graft human ears to lab mice. They are evil
motherfuckers. I'm not going to put those drugs in my body -- th
just going to kill the parts of my brain that are working so well! Y

vant me to be a robot like the rest of you. Fuck that shit and fuck you!

And so off to Los Angeles I went, to get myself locked up in 've been told that it's very hard to argue with someone who is nly manic and delusion but not really that far off the mark. For ty's sake I'll spare all the details, but let me just say that I'm lucky I didn't end up with an LAPD bullet in my chest. While all mourning for Sera, the whole thing hits me on another level as because I'm very conscious of the fact that it could have been me g in some fucked up and dramatic way, and all y'all would have freaking out and trying to figure out what you could have done p it if only you had known...
kes me really glad I'm still here.

One of me and Sera's big conflicts while we were traveling was he'd always trying to get me to stop taking my psych drugs. She that they slowed me down. The whole idea of them just made ncomfortable. Sera didn't believe in a life without extremes and idn't want her experiences mediated by some drug made by The They just want you to think that you can't take care of yourself out those drugs, she'd say. She'd taken Prozac for a while when vas a teenager and had hated it. It made her numb. It killed her rive. She said she just couldn't feel anything real when she was She got off it quick and didn't look back.

Like to so many of us, psych drugs symbolized defeat in s eyes. Like having to spend your last money on a greyhound getting kicked out of the trainyard and the highway. But worse use it's not just like popping a couple pills: taking psych meds is adopting a completely different lifestyle. It means having h insurance so it means having a job so it means staying in one so it means being stable, a worker bee. The pills are a constant nder that you're dependent on the system that you hate to keep live and healthy, you're tied right into the death machine.

They say that most manic-depressives go off their drugs a h of times before they either kill themselves or realize that they them. That's a hard one to hear, and I still don't completely 'e it, but mania is alluring for sure. They say that we get addicted intensity like a drug. But of course the problem with the sity is that it's like a pendulum swing – if you swing too far over e side, you're inevitably going to swing back over in the other tion. I can plot the last eight years of my life on a graph and it d look like a big sine wave. Huge peaks and dips. And the ings have been responsible for everything cool I've ever done in

middle of nowhere; waking up so complete and alone on a train, no clue where you are only that you're heading somewhere you can stay is home for a few days. The only picture in your head someone running alongside to say goodbye the song The Last Cannonball bringing tears to your eyes where anyone can see, your invisibility a temporary savior...

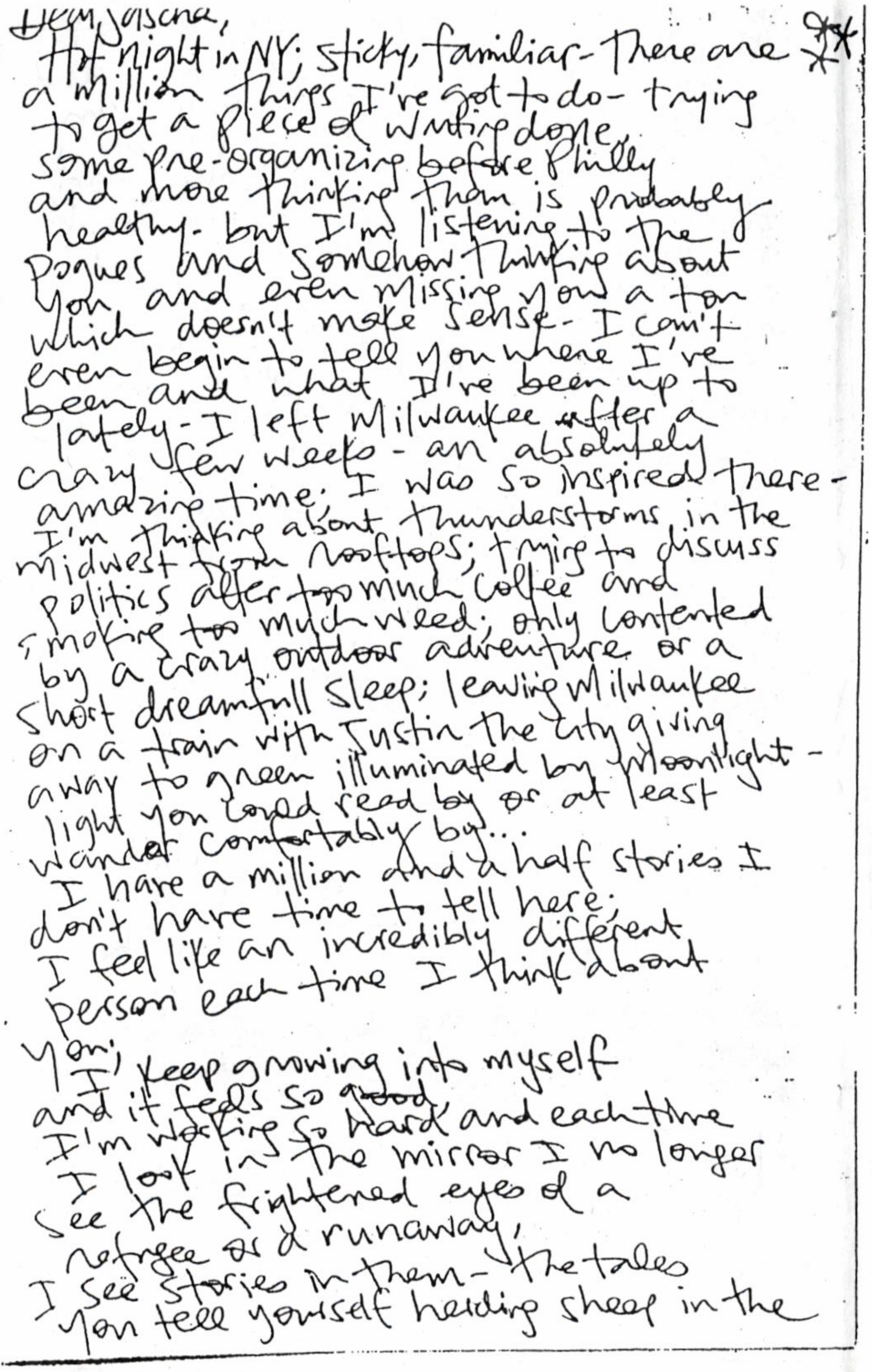
Lindsay just called me one of the loveliest people she knew. It's nice to know I've come a long way from the spindless girl I was not long ago at all. I'm just so unafraid and even that can't scare me. stories as their own masters, commanding that life be told...

I'm so glad for everything we shared – I'll never be sorry, even for everything we put eachother through... You know, telling someone you love them only to have them push you away is the easy part – its having to live with knowing you have the capacity to love another human being so much that is hard, praying for some reflection without any distortion... I learned a lot from you; from myself. And of all the times you hurt me, it was when I called you from AZ, hitching across death valley by myself and you saying you didn't want to see me – that didn't hurt like knowing everything I had to prove to you and wondering if I found myself capable, fascinating, intoxicating enough to do so...

I think I'm a real person now. I can sketch myself by hand or from memory. And I love these things about myself, the insanity which scares ex-lovers and strangers alike... Everytime I see an old gorgeous tree or hear 'A pair of brown eyes' I think of you; thinking of me, And just know I can love.

Love, Sera.

XOXOXO



Dear Sascha,
Hot night in NY; sticky, familiar- There are
a million things I've got to do- trying
to get a piece of writing done,
some pre-organizing before Philly
and more thinking than is probably
healthy- but I'm listening to the
Pogues and somehow thinking about
you and even missing you a ton
which doesn't make sense- I can't
even begin to tell you where I've
been and what I've been up to
lately- I left Milwaukee after a
crazy few weeks- an absolutely
amazing time; I was so inspired there-
I'm thinking about thunderstorms in the
midwest from rooftops; trying to discuss
politics after too much coffee and
smoking too much weed; only contented
by a crazy outdoor adventure or a
short dreamfull sleep; leaving Milwaukee
on a train with Justin the city giving
away to green illuminated by moonlight -
light you could read by or at least
wander comfortably by...
I have a million and a half stories I
don't have time to tell here;
I feel like an incredibly different
person each time I think about
you;
I keep growing into myself
and it feels so good
I'm working so hard and each time
I look in the mirror I no longer
see the frightened eyes of a
refugee or a runaway,
I see stories in them- the tales
you tell yourself herding sheep in the

my life. But the downs are fucking miserable and anyone who know what's really up with people will tell you that delusions of grandeur are always deep down masking great insecurity. Both sides of the same coin. There has to be a balance.

So in the interests of sticking around the planet for a while, I learning new dances with the enemy. At least for now I've made my choice to take the drugs and deal with all the sacrifice that go along with that choice: not being able to stay up all night, slowing down, staying in one place, holding down a job for more than a couple months at a time, going to a bunch of therapy, all things I've always been so scared of. But I really really want to live and I really want t grapple with my demons and I know it's going to take a long time. I was really worried the drugs were going to turn me into a zombie, b trust me: I feel strong emotions everyday, I need something to keep that shit in check. This isn't exactly the path I pictured myself walki down, but here I am, walking it.

Reading all her letters to me, looking at her smiling face in the dozens of photographs I have of her, listening to the mix tapes she lovingly made me, thinking about the impact she's had on my life, it so hard to believe Sera's dead. She had such wide open traveler eye I can't help but remember little things like how when we were on the road we'd wake up in the morning and tell each other our dreams. She taught me this word once in Armenian: *yavroos* which translated to something like "one who knows your soul." I loved that woman something real. She bared her soul to me. She still feels *so alive*. And that's the strange paradox about the whole thing: I think it's really because that she really *was* more alive than most of us. She felt thing more, she took more risks, she refused to play by society's rules, she lived with an intensity that most people only ever dream of -- she lived her life like someone who always felt like she didn't have enou time. She lived fast and died young just like she figured she was goi to. She wrote hundreds of pages that are inevitably going to be published and change a whole lot of people's lives. She's leaving her mark for sure.

But it's really fucking sad and I can't stop thinking of that ancient Greek myth of Icarus and his wings of wax. In the old story, Icarus' father Daedalus builds a pair of wings out of wax and feathers for his son so that they can escape from the island they've been imprisoned on. Despite all his father's warnings, as the myth goes, Icarus flies too close to the sun, melts his beautiful wings, and falls into the ocean to his death. The moral of the story being that Icarus was fortunate enough to have been given wings, but he wasn't tient enough to learn how to stay balanced -- he couldn't see ything but soaring as high as he could, so he ended up in the sea.

Around the new year, just about a month ago, me and my people re having a party over at the house in Oakland. My friend Matt was iting from Maine and we were sitting by the fireplace catching up. Matt d to me: "You know, Sascha you should really come harvest seaweed h me back East next Summer. I think you'd really love it." He smiled rmly. "It sounds great man." I replied. "But I don't think I'm going to ible to make it really. I'm trying hard to settle down for a little while l Maine is about as far as you can get from here without leaving the ntry." He smiled again. "That's alright, man. We'll be there for the next ty to forty years. You have plenty of time." I looked at his face and denly imagined it full of wrinkles, the two of us in our sixties living by ocean with a bunch of our crazy friends and growing old together. It i't seem that outlandish. It actually seemed really nice.

I wanted to get old with Sera Bilizikian still in my life. I just ured that that's the way it would be. I just want her back now and not going to happen. Sera had a beautiful pair of wings that ied her to faraway places and on amazing journeys. She burned ht in her short twenty-three years, did a lot of good for the world le she was here, and will be missed by many many people. I hope as a community we can learn the lessons from this fucked up edy, and that it inspires us to learn how to understand and take er care of each other.

's it.

~~I welcome any correspondence from folks who want to gue about depression and manic-depression and madness and we can build more support in our community for people going gh rough times. I'll reckon I'll write about it more next issue nding on what kind of responses I get. I especially want to hear people who have been or are on psych meds and what your iences have been like. I can't respond to everyone, but a number have been talking about putting together some type of zine or or something with stories and resources so what you write will bly end up in that if you're into it.~~

~~want to apologize for everyone who's written to me in the last nd a half and hasn't heard back, especially the folks who've noney for zines. Drop me an email or quick line and remind me you asked for and I'll get it out to you ASAP. (We've been g some recent technical difficulties with the copy system in town~~

just inhaling, powdered sugar clinging to my
teeth, inhaling it and feeling it sweet and
velvety... The thousand lessons I'm
now carrying with me not to put down
for a second... my best friend @ work,
Suzanne, kissing me after she had drunk
something with hot peppers in it and
her tongue was rough, like sandpaper.
Sometimes crying, sometimes smiling
sometimes grateful the worst times
numb... darting thru my favorite state
(Mississippi) green as anything, blinding,
fertile, fecund (look it up) something
making me want to cry tears of
someone else, anyone, for a break
to get some rest of being me...
I've been reading a ton of books
lately, I read about one each day I
was in Asheville and felt exhausted
and satiated with knowledge and
beauty, moments of pure joy, didn't
I say I wouldn't write a long letter?
Who am I, anyway, to resist the
urge to write?

[redacted]

I love you, See you in DxCx for Alb...

Sera

XOXOXO

2/101

Dear Sasha,

Snowing in NY. Life scattered before me, fascinating me a la vez... Here are some pictures + writing for you - I'm not going to write a long letter even though I feel like it; I've written you so many since I left CA but a lot has changed since then - I no longer care that you haven't written me any letters since then; I'm not waiting for anyone. Writing has become my sanctuary and my savior once again lately and let me tell you, it feels so good to push yourself and trust yourself and love yourself all at once →
I've been just FEELING so much lately, crying, laughing, screaming and loving every second that I know I'm alive, I'm so certain and more complete than I've ever been...

I've been in a dreamy daze since I left New Orleans with Mandy, flying over Lake Ponchartrain, Mardi Gras beads scattered about, 'Midnight Train to Georgia' bringing tears like tight springs to my eyes on the fuzzy truck radio. Leaving behind a million and then some stories - some I've told, others I've listened in on. I'm already missing the heat and sweat of winter in NOLA, the swamps, the half-living, half-~~x~~ rotten smells of fish and alcohol pictures in my head of close dancing to brass bands in the rain, kissing, sex, drugs, strange fog like a curtain, the smell of → strong coffee and rising bread as my night

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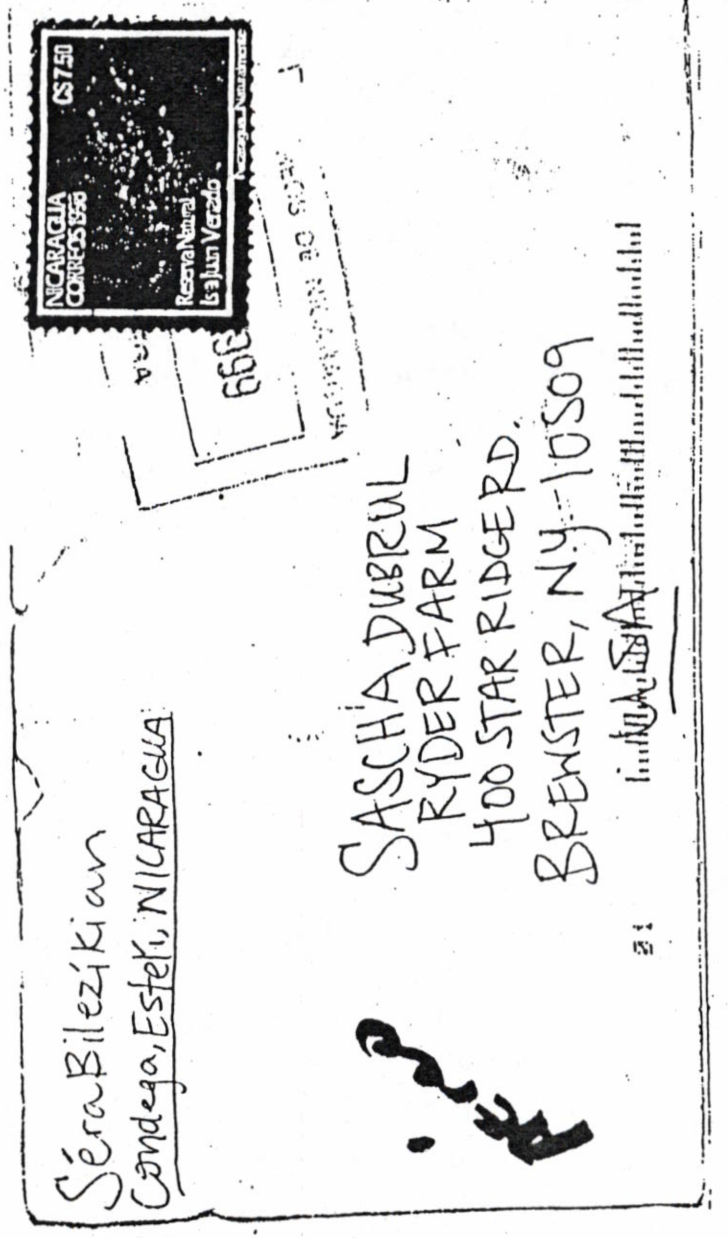
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666

Séra Bilezikian
Condega, Estelí, NICARAGUA

SASCHA DUBRUL
RYDER FARM
400 STAR RIDGE RD.
BREWSTER, N.Y. 10509
U.S.A.

Querido Sascha,
¡Hola mi amigo! I've thought about you about a Million and a half times since I've been here; only because I keep seeing things I know you'd appreciate - starting with a delightful and delicious 4-hour ride from Managua to Condega in the back of a camioneta with ~~only~~ a tarp over the wrought iron canopy - rain so loud your thinking takes ~~on~~ some crazy drastic pace; wettening the thirsty skin on your face and hot bare feet - forcing clean air into your ears, nose, heart... and although it was pitch black by the time we started climbing in the truck up the mountains and through the pretty, agricultural town of Estelí (a fierce Sandanista stronghold - and arguably the most beautiful road in all of Nicaragua and probably the greenest in the world) it was still beautiful in a rather silent way, a haunting way, a hold-in-your-stomach-and-lean-back-if-you-dare...' because you simply Must way... Stars or fireflies jumping out of the trees, the fog, the sky at me... a bridge rumbling under me... The smells of burning leaves and living horses - surrounding me - cold, wet, but hot and content... to forget the shooting pains throughout your body, you must

/ es que j'ai ~~nécessité~~ besoin de trouver en dedans
mon coeur, et mes idées...
et je sais que quand tu me dises
choses à moi - c'est ~~le vraiment~~, VRAI
Au est rien mais complètement
honoré et je ~~te~~ crois quand ~~me~~ tu
me dises que tu m'aimes. ~~A~~ et aussi
tu me manques et je pense ~~à~~ de
toi souvent, ici est une pièce
de écrivature que j'ai finit et j'espère
que tu le aimerais - peut-être tu
vas comprendre cette lettre - ~~je pense~~
~~que~~ JE CROIS OUI parce que tu est ~~un~~ un
homme intelligent... mais si non,
ça m'est égal...
Cette lettre était ~~écrite~~ ~~plus~~ ECRIRE PLUS pour
moi que pour toi -

écrire~~z~~-moi si tu veux,
lise~~z~~ que j'ai ~~écrite~~ ECRIT
pense~~z~~ de moi de temps en temps,
et si tu as besoin, trouver une
dictionnaire française.

Je t'aime

Jeff
X

el otro lado

S'il vous plaît...

mais ~~de~~ j'ai parlé avec Virginie (et je même aussi....) - une moment - je suis en une cémetarie, l'heure est en l'après-midi ~~est~~ (c'est très pres de le soir...) est six heures et quart... et le Soleil est très ~~bell~~ beau, orange, jaune, rose, c'est silencieux ici, c'est facil à penser, aussi en une langre que je ne ~~bonnais~~ SAIS pas bien! ok - revenons a nos montons (une expresion français que ma mère toujours disait → la translation n'est pas exactement, on ~~ingle~~ anglais, on vent dire 'let's return to our sheep.' [redacted]) Maintentant, je vois beaucoup de choses que je n'avais pas vû ~~cette~~ en la passé...

je pense que tu est/étais le meilleure pour moi ~~de~~ ~~todo~~ ~~le~~ du monde parce que tu ~~n'étais~~ pas ~~me~~ ~~m'est aide~~ tu ~~[illegible]~~ ne m'a pas aidé par avec mon egoïsme mal, mon problèmes avec je-même, ~~ne~~ ~~toujours mas dit~~ Tu ne m'a pas dit que tu m'aimes... ou tu m'as ~~[illegible]~~ aimé..., que je suis une bonne femme ~~bien~~, belle, intelligente, etc... ~~tout~~ les choses que je voudrais; que en mes rêves j'entendes

Morning i got to visit a granja about 20 Minutes north into the mountains, and even got to help out a bit, weeding and cleaning up - they seemed delighted but also perplexed at my eagerness to help out; I didn't think it was worth going into the entire 'we speak the same language' tirade concerning gardening - I was just excited to see my first avacado, papaya, mango and Melocotón plants and feel some rich soil moving through my fingers again, mud squishing through my toes... it has been so long since nature has been my primary form of communicatio and i've stopped and started this so many times - I keep getting distracted by the loud lluvia en el techo de [redacted] metal... or busy... Since I wrote the first page of this letter, I've been to Esteli and back, in the daylight this time, with the tarp off the iron canopy of Helen (this forewoman from England who came down here in the 80's to work with ♀ groups in the revolution and never left)'s truck and I swear, each centimeter higher into the mountains, further away from the redaza of Earth we had been not segundos before was more frighteningly, clarifyingly beautiful than before.

und it's been raining non-stop since
nostra llegado, pero no me importa
porque la lluvia, me descansa...
estoy leyendo un libro, se llama
Fragile Victory'; una historia de
ondega mientras la revolution
hay photos de algunas de las
ujeres con quien estoy trabajando!
hese ladies are fierce and intense;
ruly inspiring → to me all of us
rigadistas (there are 5 of us) stayed
p talking by a candle with
everal mosquitoes drowning in the
elted wax in one of the
ouses we're working on (→ after
e hurricane, a lot of women
ho head households in this
own were not given aid for
new house if theirs got
estroyed; many also were
ingle mothers who never really
wned houses, most of them fucked
ver by the property and divorce
ws, and sexism in general...)
These women constructoras have been
uilding these houses for almost a
ear now; and they are beautiful,
mall, made of cement and
o conducive to late night
onversations, aided by a bottle of
uban rum, of course...
nd tonight we were listening to this "
talk about everything

if i ~~couldn't say it why does it flow~~
~~so easily [illegible]~~ I loved ~~you,~~ these
~~words~~ like one the ~~only~~ one you can
remember ~~mumble~~ under your
breath and forget
~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~,
~~there~~

→ Chèr Monsieur de la brûlé, (Sasha)
An recentment ~~c'est~~ difical pour moi
~~de~~ penser ou ~~écrire~~ parler en l'Anglais ou l'Espaňol;
écrire, oui, c'est vrai que c'est la seule
chose que je peux faire...
Je suis ~~en~~ à Austin, jusqu'à dimanche.
le vingt-trois ~~de~~ janvier quand je vais
~~en~~ à Houston et Nouveaux-Orléans.
il ya ~~moi~~ beaucoup de choses que
je veux tu dire ~~à toi~~, parceque mon
français est ~~mal~~ MAUVAISE - quelle dommage,
~~[illegible]~~ triste, je ne tu veux pas telephoner
~~[illegible]~~ jusqu'à ~~une~~ UN PEU peu de jours,
parce que je pense que j'ai besoin
de le temps ~~de~~ pensar, seule...
quand tu m'as telephoné dimanche,
j'était triste et confusée
et un peu furieuse (je suis vraiment
desolée mais j'ai oublié le mot pour

vent/vouloir = querer

as/~~[illegible]~~es avoir besoin = nessesitar

parler = hablar

aussi = tambien

dire/diser = decir

chose = cosa

meillure = mieux

je-même = myself

rêve = sueño

entend(er) = oir

peut/peux = poder

Hey-

i've been writing nonstop for 2 days and feel reborn- didn't mean to write you a letter in a language you don't speak, it just happened, I've been realizing a lot of things lately- you were good for me, helped me stand on my own- made me even, made me say things if i want or need to hear them instead of waiting for you to or wanting you to- which just makes things you have said to me seem that much more powerful- I'm just sorry I don't have ~~more~~ more trust in myself but I'm working on that as we (don't!) speak! I wrote this recently, let me know what you think. Write or call or email si tu quieres.

Love, Sefa xo

PS. Tim corrected this, she insisted!

parceque = porque

liser = leer

je sais = yo se

trouver, find

je vais = yo voy

désolée = sorry

jusqu'à = hasta

j'ai oublié = yo olvidé

dimanche = domingo

mot = palabra

en dedans = al dentro

coeur = corazon

vraiment = verdad

rien = nada

croire = creer

ecrire = escribir

---

government, to love, to war, and how you can avoid a bad rum hangover by simply drinking a pitcher of beer before bed...
She's an amazingly skilled woman kind of a legend up here- there is tons of work to do: it's hard work but good work- I like nothing more than working myself to the absolute physical and emotional limit for some cause higher than any I even know, with people I'm thrilled and honored and inspired to know... lifting lots of cement blocks is the job I've somehow inherited (me; always running my mouth about how much I like lifting heavy things to test myself and my strength... like everything else about me my crazy tendencies to fall in love with a time of day or a look in someone's face; to want too much turn backwards so far I'm staring my own presence in the face- always, yes, get me in trouble. The women I'm working with are amazingly rad.

Things are incredibly good

The occasional wandering pig or monkey keeps me well-enough entertained

I'm actually getting ~~same~~ some writing done even though I'm wasting energy thinking too much as always...

I hope things are good with you and your spirits are up and the zines are going well-

my Spanish is all coming back to me- it is nice to have a good memory I must say- and I learned a new tortilla recipe from this amazing woman named Miriam who is Amánda's sister, and was head of Education in this area under Ortega) and in return, I taught her how to make lmond Milk (which is really difficult without a blender, I ust say! But like so many other things in life, uniquely and nsanely possible...)

There's even an herbalist in town who I might track down just to learn more about the history of herbalism n this area

-loud crickets-

even louder frogs-

we simply need to shut down to WTO- n all seriousness- is this a world akeover plan I've got to tone down and get depressed over?

Este perro en el taller (dónde rabajan las mujeres en el colectivo de ujeres constructoras) acaba de

the Winnebago, we're kind of squatting it I guess, I get a lot of writing done here-) And the rain was making the bike sqreak when I used the brakes, thru the pitch black streets, quiet, and it sounded like an alarm:

Caution: life ahead...

I hope you're doing well and learning a lot - I can't wait for you to show me what you've learned (or maybe my back can't...) and I want to see what you've been writing- no idea what I'm going to read at this thing in Houston but I'll get something. Please write me in NOLA or leave me a voicemail or an email. Remember, to breath for the short time you are loaned breath... I think I'm getting a ~~the~~ new tattoo soon, just another dark blue story of this black and olored life...

I love you

Love, Se

xo

SERA·BALLARD·BILEZIKIAN
c/o AMMI KELLAR
3134 Burgundy St. New Orleans. LA

grrr... alright, well I started another page, I might as well keep going...

I miss you, Sascha. I miss having you at my side or at my back or across the room to smile at or in bed to lie next to, keep you up late talking - it felt good travelling with someone else, and it feels really good to be on my own, but I do miss you - when I ran into Jay from NY and he asked what I'd been up to, I contemplated saying 'filling up the holes in my heart that Sascha made' - of course I didn't because that's ridiculous and he's so flirty I thought he'd try and 'make me feel better' but I realized what I was really feeling, just the impact that something as crazy and profound and intense and wonderful and scary and fast and antagonizing and absurd and natural and tenacious and unattainable as love had on me; someone who thought they knew it all but at the same time didn't give herself the confidence. Like last night, I was biking back here to VA's (where me + Jen are staying, in this cute little shack/cellar thing outside

ME & SERA IN SEATTL AT THE WTO PROTES NOV. 199

AT THE BATTZAVE OAKTOWN, CA EARLY 2000

o acho dias- y sus ojos aun no
stan abiertos y son muy cariñosos y
erfectos en la manera que
parece mas imposible quando
a vida continue...
también hay un mono en este
alle; pero no est muy amenable...
l otro dia, el intentó de agarrar
i pelo! Quedarse en un arbe
odo el dia. He oído "Careless Whisper"
lamente una vez, y en inglês.
tay muy feliz. Est como si tuviera una idea
nueva cada minuto, cada pensamiento,
ada aliento... ah, perdonéme pero es
ficil estar en Nicaragua, y no pensar
mo si fuera una poeta... No he
enido ningun sueño aqui - quizas
rque no estoy acustumbrada ya...
ro estoy lista de escribir los
nmediatamente después de despertarme
u're made me want to tap back into my
azy under (over? inside? out of reach?)
rld of dreams once again - I
ss it; I miss really resting, which I
n't seem to really know how to do...
hope you get this letter - mail can
e so unpredictable sometimes!
ll be home on the 27th, ready to go
ytime after that - I'm excited to
are my life with you again; 'We made this
rld we are living in, now we have to
ke it over' - James Baldwin I'll see you
on; cuidate bien, estoy pensando de ti,
n ambrazo, un beso, seis páginas de
mi vida...
éna xoxoxo ¿nada mas?

pleadingly, 'let me love your soul...' ah, language-translation. Me da dolor de cabeza...

So. I'm gonna be here for another 2 weeks or maybe 3; then I'm meeting Ammi in Houston for a bookreading she's doing and wants me to do with her and we're going to make our way back to NOLA together - I'll be there for a while, so you can write me a letter there (hint, hint) after the 24th or so. Not sure what's up after that. I might speed up my trip out west because I might go to Mexico this summer if I make enough $, or I might go to Big Mountain - ah, freedom! - Clea said when I come back we have to have a party in the old Amtrack station because I've never been there and I might find a few minutes to catch up with you. If you're good. If it's warm enough I want to ride trains up the coast or at least to Santa Cruz - I have a few people I could go with but I'd much rather go with you, we owe eachother a train ride together, remember? Are you worth 3 precious pages in my stolen journal? It looks like you are...

and freedom really is such a threatening thing- and she's right, I have to stop holding back, trying to please other people, I think I was put on this planet to do a few things, writing being one, trying to change the world another, loving people perhaps but not at the expense of any integral part of myself I need to be complete.

:Candles and Sirens:

I feel like I'm at Ben's sqrat in DC getting a backrub and drinking green apple cider

....

I want to let my heart beat at its own pace, I want my shoulders to slump down, but not my heart to quiet; this mental and physical transformation is like trying to train a disobedient dog which you love but wish you had never agreed to...

I miss you, of course not pathetically, but healthily, you made me realize a lot of things, you had a profound impact on who I am, there's a word in Armenian (one of the 15 I actually know) yavroos, which means 'one who knows your soul' usually used.

Ms. BILEZIKIAN
Austin, Texas

[redacted]

PM 87
07 JAN
2000

Mr. SASCHA DUBRUL
5912 Genoa St.
Oakland, CA 94608

Herido Sascha,
Rainy raw day in Austin while I swear I
t a sunburn yesterday. Keeping busy here
tween writing, demos, learning about
ikes and herbs, helping Virginia work on
pening up a building while Tim's been
itting the Billboards, we even found a
lling card yesterday with tons of money
it and Angel+Balem are here and so is
racken and my buddy Altercation (we made
plan to hitch the entire TransAmerican
ighway in about 2 years - from Anchorage AK
o Tierra del Fuego, Argentina because we
th have family in Alaska and friends
oving to Argentina) and the crazy circusy
nergy of Bisbee is still thriving here - life is
uch an ecstatic performance for many
these folks and me with my intensely
erious outlook on life needs to
earn to love it more, Tim's been having
rough time and then a great time,
keeps threatening to leave and then
wearing he never will, that's love for ya...
's an amazing person - I can't believe
've known him such a short time.
iss (as they say in Richmond) we had a
razy trip to Bisbee - stopped in Las Vegas
all places, and hung out with Squash's
om who was awesome - took isolated

got out to play in the snow, climb trees
or rocks - Bisbee was crazy, really surreal
and our trip to Austin seemed so well
timed we hit more sunrises and
sunsets than there even were that
day or two I'm sure, but I'm not
complaining.

I've been thinking about you a lot,
when I see something you'd appreciate
the way I did when I was down
South, or when I hear your voice
(in cada idioma), I still wear your
shirt when its cold, and it still looks
weird on me, like it should be black or
I should be more colorful...
But I'm glad we're doing our own
thing - life keeps taking on these
strange urgencies; and then
forcing me to relax; I'm finally
confronting a lot of what I've been
avoiding, crying a lot and feeling better,
sneaking into hot tubs and ignoring
the fact that my bike has
brakes to forget -
hanging out with Virginia is so good
for me - we are so different,
and almost need to be more alike.
something she said stuck out at
me like she had slapped me
across the face or something,
about how you can't be afraid to
be as free as you want to be -